CHENIES PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2021

The year under report will no doubt go down in history as one of those key dates our grandchildren will remember like the 1st World War. It has certainly confirmed Chenies as a wonderful place to live and we count our blessings as we emerge into better days ahead.

The Council held six meetings during the year. Meetings are held at 8.00pm on the first Wednesday every other month usually in the Sun Room at the rear of The Baptist Chapel however due to Covid restrictions three of these meetings have been held online via Zoom with parishioners able to login by prior arrangement with the Clerk. Meetings are open to all and the first item on the agenda is the democratic quarter hour which gives parishioners the opportunity to raise any issues of concern.

I was elected chairman and Charles Macleod Matthews as vice chairman at our annual meeting last May and Martin Walker, Gill Leaper and David Martin have continued to serve as councillors. Councillors are elected for a four year term however in 2019 local elections were postponed for a year because Buckinghamshire Council was due to come into being and due to lockdown last year's elections were also postponed; thus your present council has been in place for six years. On your behalf I would like to thank them all for their work during this time. Gill deserves a special mention. She has decided not to stand for election this time after serving this council for many years.

Paul Messenger has served as clerk since 1st April 2019 and I would like to thank him on behalf of the parish for his time and work over the past year.

Local Government

The new Buckinghamshire Council has completed its first year. The sixteen Community Boards are now established as are local groupings of parish and town councils known as Village Forums. Chenies is part of the Chesham and Villages Board area.

Maintenance

The grass cutting contract with Chesham Town Council covering the Green and Greensward has been in place for a year now and appears to run well. The contract has been renewed for the current year.

Planning permission and the consent of the Bedford Estates as Landlord were obtained for crown lifting the trees on the Green and the work was successfully carried out last June. We are grateful for the team of volunteers who turned out to help dispose of the cut branches the following Saturday and feedback on the lighter/brighter appearance of the green has been favourable.

The village Green has been under pressure over the past year due to careless or inconsiderate parking, builder's vehicles and access problems. Our lease of the Green requires us to prevent parking on the grass and a decision has been taken to provide more 'dragon's teeth' bollards and 'No Parking on the Grass' signs. Buckinghamshire Highways has been asked to look at carrying out repairs to the granite set edging. We are currently looking into the possibility of white line Access Protection Markings in certain key locations and widening the central slip road across the Green.

Footpaths

We have had the wettest winter since 2014 and vastly increased usage as people take a welcome break from lockdown and so it is unsurprising that all our paths and bridleways have suffered increased wear and tear. Added to which volunteer work parties organised by The Chiltern Society have been unable to get out to attend to repairs and maintenance. River flooding has been a further difficulty especially by Mill Farm and at Sarratt Bottom.

This should not stop people reporting problems and if anyone has a path maintenance or access difficulty to report they should do so HERE and also let us know via email to cheniesparishcouncil@hotmail.co.uk.

Highways

An unofficial solution to the flooding at the top of Village Road has been found and hopefully we have seen the last of this long standing nuisance. The flooding on the A404 between the garden centre and Claypits Lane has received attention but as reported last year a more permanent solution is still needed. Unlike your Parish Council, unfortunately Buckinghamshire Highways do not see this potentially dangerous flood as a priority.

Planning

We continue to consider all planning applications in the parish and comment on these to the planning department for the Chiltern Area of Buckinghamshire Council. Your Council is very anxious to preserve the look and feel of the very special environment we enjoy in Chenies and whilst fully accepting the need for our housing stock to be maintained and enhanced in line with modern day requirements we do comment or object when we feel that a particular application adversely affects this especially in the Conservation Area. It is frustrating for residents and for your Council when the Planners do not always agree.

The Chiltern & South Bucks Local Plan was submitted for government approval last year but it has now been withdrawn by Buckinghamshire Council pending an overall plan for Buckinghamshire which will need to be developed by the new council.

The Precept

The parish council decided not to increase the precept for the financial year to 31 March 2022 thus it will remain at £8,240. Confusingly you will see on your latest Council Tax Bill that this decision has resulted in an increase of 3.8% due to changes in the number of properties in the Parish subject to Council Tax and their respective tax bands.

Best Kept Village Competition

As last year the organisers have cancelled the coming year's competition.

Traffic Calming

The MVAS Camera has been put to good use but has remained idle during lockdown periods. Our thanks to Martin Walker who maintains the data collected.

The plan announced last year for a footpath to be created on the east side of Village Road from opposite the cricket Club entrance to the A404 stalled last summer due to reorganisation of the new Buckinghamshire Council and the creation of the new Community Boards which now approve project funding. Our application is still 'live' and we hope a Feasibility Study for this will receive approval shortly.

Unfortunately the idea to help parking and access difficulties either side of The Red Lion was not approved by Highways and can go no further.

The Community Speed Watch scheme has been on hold due to Covid restrictions but we hope this can be revived. Funding is available for our own new hand-held speed camera. Hopefully our trained volunteers and any new recruits who may wish to join them will be able to get to work during the summer.

Broadband

A fibre to premises service is now available for the majority of residents.

Electricity Supply Network

UK Power Networks have now reached the agreement of affected landowners to place our supply network underground. This will result in the current overhead cables on wooden poles which run down and across the Chess valley from Latimer and on towards Sarratt being removed over the next 2 years. There will need to be a new cable laid in Village and Latimer Roads to serve Chenies Bottom who currently receive their power from the other side of the valley.

Website

I am pleased to report that, after long delays in trying to revive the original site, the Parish Council has taken the decision to commission an entirely new one which will be managed by the Clerk. Its primary purpose will be for the publication of all the information which councils must now provide including Agenda, Minutes, Accounts and policies. There will be a brief history, some photographs and links to other sites of possible interest including Buckinghamshire Council for e.g. waste collection, planning applications etc.

David Le Neve Foster
Chairman
April 2021